

# **EVELYN MADSEN MILES: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE OF AUSTIN, NEVADA, 1932-1936**

Interviewee: Evelyn Madsen Miles

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## **Description**

Born of Danish immigrant parents in 1911, Evelyn Madsen Miles has spent most of her life in Reno, Nevada. Because her parents stressed the importance of education, she graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1932 with a B.A. degree and a desire to teach. Her first position in Austin High School (Austin, Nevada) lasted four years. In that short time, Mrs. Miles feels that she gained the independence, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility that guided her through more than thirty-five years of teaching.

In her oral history, Evelyn Madsen Miles records the people, places, and events that made her stay in Austin, Nevada, memorable. She recounts not only the happenings between 1932 and 1936, but also the folklore of the area that she absorbed and made part of her memories. Researchers will find that this personal view of Austin and its heritage is the basis for literature.



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An Oral History Conducted by Nancy Myers

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

Born of Danish immigrant parents in 1911, Evelyn Madsen Miles has spent most of her life in Reno, Nevada. Because her parents stressed the importance of education, she graduated from the University of Nevada-Reno in 1932 with a B.A. degree and a desire to teach. Her first position, in the Austin High School (Austin, Nevada), lasted four years. In that short time, Mrs. Miles feels that she gained the independence, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility that guided her through more than thirty-five years of teaching.

In her oral history, Evelyn Madsen Miles records the people, places, and events that made her stay in Austin, Nevada memorable. She recounts not only the happenings between 1932 and 1936 but also the folklore of the area that she absorbed and made part of her memories. Researchers will find that this personal view of Austin and its heritage is the basis for literature.

Accurately, and enthusiastically, Evelyn Madsen Miles recorded her recollections of Austin in three sessions during February 1983

at her home in Reno. Mrs. Miles' review of her oral history transcript resulted in a few stylistic changes for the sake of clarity and in the addition of several details and names for a more thorough history.

The Oral History Project of the University of Nevada-Reno Library preserves the past and present for future research by tape recording the memoirs of people who have been important to the development of Nevada and the West. Scripts resulting from the interviews are deposited in the special collections departments of the University libraries at Reno and Las Vegas. Evelyn Madsen Miles has generously donated her literary rights in her oral history to the University of Nevada-Reno and has designated the volume as open for research.

Nancy Myers  
University of Nevada-Reno  
1983



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## LIFE IN AUSTIN

### AUSTIN'S HERITAGE

Austin was just as big as Virginia City was at the time of the gold strike here. It was mostly silver in Austin. It was founded in 1862. There was sixty million dollars taken out in silver, and you can see where it is in the V canyon that there's diggings—piles of diggings all over the place. Also, it's on the Pony Express route; in 1862 the Pony Express [ran] from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento. When they delivered the mail across the country, Austin was one of the [stops]. At one time, there were ten thousand people there; no wonder there were houses and old foundations all over the place. The silver boom only lasted twenty years.

It got its name from Austin, Texas. That's another thing that came up with the post office. Philomena Borrego was the postmistress there, and my mail would go to Austin, Texas before it came to Austin, Nevada [laughs].

Of course all around Austin, in all that area in all directions, there were mining

camps that had started because the miners, they'd go anywhere. It had mothered thirty other mining camps, and Austin was the only one that had outlived them all, but they were all just small claims.

They also had camels in Austin to use for carrying ore. They were from Beale's expedition, but they weren't successful as they were used to walking on sandy soil so were let loose to wander and die off. Nevada Bell used this incident for the telephone directory cover several years ago.

Now the courthouse, that was built around 1865. It's an old big stone building, and I know it has twenty-foot ceilings. In the corner—the way they heated it—there was a big old pot-bellied stove. In this old courthouse is still the old original jury box that was built at the time that the courthouse was built. It was the county seat of Lander County until last year [1980]. For my shorthand class, I used to take them to court cases and learn court reporting.

Austin and Battle Mountain have been fighting over that for several years because they—Battle Mountain—wanted the county

seat moved over there, but it lost out in the election until last year when Austin lost out because Battle Mountain now has three thousand people whereas Austin only has three hundred. The people from Battle Mountain didn't want to have to drive that ninety-two miles—the county commissioners and the county officers. So I think there's only one person left in Austin that's on the county board of any kind because the other woman that was on, retired. She wants to be in Austin. That's the reason why they changed the county seat, and they hoped to just keep the building and use it as a historical monument. They might put part of a museum in there because they have part of a museum in the old Gridley store.

That old building is still standing too up there in the upper part of Austin. It used to be a general merchandise store. When old man [R. C.] Gridley was running for office—that was the time of the Civil War—they needed money for a sanitary fund which was the forerunner of the Red Cross of today. Gridley lost the election. The bet was that he would carry a fifty-pound sack of flour down through Austin and back if he lost the election, so that's what he had to do. But in doing that, they had raised six thousand dollars on the first day. So then somebody got the bright idea to take it to other mining camps around the state as a fund raising for this sanitary fund. When they got through with the mining camps, they ended up raising \$275,000, just from the sack of flour. That original sack of flour is up here at our Nevada Historical Society; it was preserved. But the old Gridley store, they want to fix up out there for a museum also.

Another thing that came up exciting out there was the Reese River. It's a river, but it's only a few feet wide and a few inches deep; we used to go down there duck hunting. Somebody back East as a stock promotion sold stock in the Reese River Navigation

Company, and people fell for it, thinking that it was navigatable, but it wasn't. It was just a stock promotion. (Like some of these people when they had that stock promotion in Florida; I know some people out here in the West bought property for retirement; then when they went back to Florida to look over the piece of property they'd bought, it was just nothing but swamps. There was nothing they could do about it, so people do get sucked in on these promotion deals.) But that was always a big joke out there was the Reese River Navigation Company.

The old Masonic and Odd Fellows building that was built in 1867, they still have their meetings there. St. George's Episcopal Church that was built in 1877 was pretty run down, but Molly—well, when she was married, Molly Magee Knudtsen, she used to be on the Board of Regents—donated some money to have St. George's Episcopal Church restored. St. Augustine's Catholic Church was built in 1866, and the last time I saw it, I was just so sick. It was a beautiful little church; somebody had broken out the windows, and the wooden front steps, the weeds were coming up. But they're now starting to renovate that, so they can use it. There's also a new Mormon church; the Mormons have moved into Austin. The old Methodist church, it's a recreation center now; it was built in 1866.

The old American Legion Hall which is called the John Hiskey Hall. John Hiskey was one of my students in Austin. At the beginning of the war, he was a flyer, and he was doing his training at Pensacola. When they were in training, two planes collided out off the coast of Florida, and John was never found. It was very tragic. And that's why the American Legion Hall in Austin is called the John Hiskey Hall, after him. They've also fixed it up where they're using it for a senior citizens center now, where they serve meals

to the senior citizens still living there. But a new building is in the planning.

Now the old Austin bank, it was built in 1863, and it was constructed of brick that was made right there in Austin, made and fired in Austin. At the time I was there, it's funny, the banker's name was James Austin. I remember one day when I was coming down the hill from school, he waved to me to come on over; he had something to show me, and he had a thousand-dollar bill. He said, «Have you ever seen one?» And I said, «No,» so we laughed about that. But then in 1962, they built a new bank, so this other old building is standing empty.

The firehouse was just a small building because the only thing they had in it was a hand-pull engine [laughs]. I know one night when we were staying at the International, there was a fire in a house up the hill, and when we went out to look, here was the volunteer firemen trying to get this hand-pull fire engine up the hill. By the time they got it up there, the house had burned down. [Laughs] They had nothing motorized. But of course now, they have a new firehouse and a new engine where they can get up the hill without having to pull it up. You could see those men trying to drag that old hand-pull—I'd never seen one before in my life—to get that old cart with the hose around, and then they had to bucket the water because there were no fire hydrants [laughs].

Then also an interesting thing, Emma Nevada who was a famous opera singer; she was born Emma Wixom [Palmer], but went by the name of Emma Nevada. In 1877 she went to Europe and sang, and she sang at the coronation of George VI in England. She only came back to Austin once; that was always in her heart that she wanted to come back and see all of her old friends. So she came back and was royally entertained in Austin for her

success as an opera singer; then she went back to England. She was living in Liverpool, and she died in 1940 at the age of 81 in England, but she was born in Austin.

Also the Sazerac [Lying] Club originated in Austin. After the fellows had worked in the mines, they'd go to the bar and sit around a big round table and have a few drinks; then they'd start seeing who could tell the biggest lie. That's how it got started, this Sazerac Liars Club, and it's still in existence today as far as I know, because every once in a while those who were in on the beginning of it get together and talk about the old [days]. Oh, it was not exactly lies, but these far-out jokes.

Now, the Nevada Central Railroad, it was built by [J. G.] Phelps Stokes from New York. In 1879 is when it was completed. It came up from Battle Mountain to Austin, ninety miles, and was used to haul the ore from Austin to Battle Mountain to the Central Pacific Railroad, before it was known as the Southern Pacific Railroad.

They also had a smelter at the bottom of the hill there in Austin from the mines. That big old building was still standing when I was out there, and it was used as the first smelter in town.

Now the stories vary [about] Stokes Castle. When you come down the hill from Austin, you have to walk on this narrow dirt road out to where there's a bluff, and this bluff stands there that you can look for miles up the Reese River. They told me when I was there that Stokes had built that castle, so he could watch the progress of the building of the railroad. But then there's a controversy on that; this castle he built is patterned after one of the old castles in Rome. It was built in 1897, and they say it was the summer home of Stokes, although he never used it himself. There was some relative that did come out and stay for a while, but it was not actually lived in.

It was just built like a big square chimney; I have a picture of it, how it looked back in '32 because it still had the balconies on each floor. The downstairs was the kitchen and dining area; then you took this narrow step up to the second floor. On the second floor was the living room and entertainment area; then you took another narrow step up to the third floor. There were two bedrooms and they even had a bath up there, and they had the pipes where they could run down. There was a trap door that went up onto the roof where you could go up, like a sundeck, I guess. It was built one floor on top of the other with just a tall, narrow chimney. Now, they called it a castle, but it's not like the castles that are in Europe. But at the time of the Roman Empire, in order to get a message from Rome to their farthest point in Great Britain, they had this type of castle built. You could get a message from Rome to England in three days by this method of sending messages from one tower to the next all the way up. So I thought that was interesting. So there's different stories on why that was built.

J. M. Hiskey was president of the school board, and I taught his two children, Marjory and John. He was the first general manager of the railroad and the first train from Austin to Battle Mountain. Of course the old railroad was the old steam engine, and if there wasn't too many passengers or freight, they had this funny-looking boxcar thing that they used to run back and forth. Herb Merrill was the engineer, and his wife's name was Lena; they had a little boy. He was originally from Battle Mountain, and we used to call him «Henhouse.» And he brought that name over from Battle Mountain, so I don't know how that ever originated; called him «Henhouse» Merrill.

At one time, Austin had a woman sheriff, Kitty Bonner. In fact they had her [on] that

television program called *To Tell the Truth*, where they have these three women, and they'd question them; then they had to pick out the one that they thought was the real one. Of course, they guessed her because she was a woman in her late seventies. She had a small house in the upper part of Austin, and she had a beautiful flower garden around the front, but she also had the only barber chair in town. She used to cut all the men's hair, but she couldn't charge anything for a haircut because she had no barber's license. She'd just have a plate on a little table by the door for whatever donations, so she could accept that, but she couldn't set a price for a haircut. Also she was real good to people in town that if there was any illnesses, she'd go act as part nurse; then she was always baking cakes for something, so she had a very busy life. But old Kitty Bonner was quite a character at that time.

Edgar Eather was the judge of the third judicial district, and Howard Browne was the district attorney. Lena Streshley McLeod, later she married Charles McLeod, was the county clerk there for years. And C. F. Littrell was the county treasurer; that was Mrs. Hiskey's father. Mrs. Hiskey still lives here in Reno; she's ninety or ninety-one years old. Bert Acree was the county recorder and auditor. George Myles was the county assessor. James Moore was the sheriff; when he'd go out and get a deer or ducks, he'd bring it to the schoolteachers in the Bird Cage to cook for our dinner. And Leo Gallagher was the deputy sheriff. Hubert Rast was the justice of the peace. William Chatelle was the constable, and they had a daughter, Eleanor, that I had in school. I had Tom Gallagher; Anita Rast had graduated the year before I was there, so I didn't have any of the Rast kids.

They even had an undertaker out there; Humphrey [H. A. Kearns] was his name. George Thorpe owned the morgue, which he



fixed up for the schoolteachers to live in. We called it the Bird Cage. When somebody died out there, they were taken to the cemetery in the old horse-drawn hearse that was in the building in front of the Bird Cage. Whenever there was a funeral, they passed out handbills and everyone was invited. At the bottom of the hill, at the bottom of the grade, there are two big cemeteries; one on one side of the road is for the Protestants and the Masons and Odd Fellows, and the big one on the other side of the road is the Catholic cemetery. Also there was the Indian cemetery. They still have a lot of these fancy granite and marble headstones, but they're not a perpetual care—you plow through the weeds and all the junk and try to find somebody. But the ones that I know that are here in Reno now, they go out once a year at Memorial Day, and they clean up their plots themselves. Of course those that have no living relatives, they're just not taken care of.

We had a doctor in town; his name was Dr. [George] Belanger. He was an old man; he could cure ordinary ailments, but if anybody really got sick, you had to hurry up and get them into Fallon or into Reno. Of course now, they have an ambulance in Austin, so they can get people out of there in a hurry. A dentist came once every two weeks, so if you had any dental problems, well, serious, you had to go into either Fallon or Reno, so it was kind of isolated as far as health-wise.

Now, a lot of these [buildings] are just boarded up in the front and in the back. The last time I was up there, the back was falling in. But the Rasts had a service station, and Edith Givens had a little store where you could get notions and magazines and odds and ends. Lee Maestretti had a garage, and he also had the power plant. It was just a DC current generator, and he had the generator there that supplied the current, the electricity for the town. But since then, Sierra Pacific

Power Company has bought out his plant and installed a modern power plant up there now.

I know that when we were living in the Bird Cage, at that time, it was seventeen cents a kilowatt, which was too expensive for us, so we would just use the lights when necessary; otherwise, we'd eat by candlelight to keep our power bill down.

The Escobars had a store where they had clothing and shoes and notions, practical clothes for the miners and working people and highway fellows. Uriartes had a bar; I know that it was over here on the corner. She was also a pretty good cook; I had two of their kids in school, Angelo and Danny. They had five children.

And I guess you notice on some of these names, most of the people in Austin were Spanish Basque. That's why my minor in French didn't do me any good when I went out to Austin. They all signed up for Spanish; nobody wanted French, so I never used it. The English teacher taught Spanish.

Murphys had a store; they had groceries and household supplies and ranch supplies for all the ranches all up and down the valleys there. They'd come into Murphy's store to get all their general supplies. Celly Barainca had a service station; I think that's the one that Leroy Cassidy bought out later, Barainca's service station. Although there wasn't a great deal of traffic from Fallon to Ely by way of Austin and Eureka because most of the tourist travel went from Battle Mountain on the old highway. They called it the Lincoln Highway in those days; that was the main highway across the United States. It was a faster road than trying to go from Fallon to Ely, but at least you had a place to buy gas if you came that direction. The Austin Commercial Company was again another one with groceries and general merchandise and hardware. That was the one that was taken

over by George Myles and his brother Jack; they had the Austin Commercial Company.

There was the Hogan Hotel and Cafe, and they had a big room there where they used to show movies, and we'd have dances at the old Hogan Hotel. They had a dance hall upstairs at the old Hogan's Hotel; that was up in the middle of the block. There were just benches; there were no chairs to sit on there. And we'd all look forward to going to the movies once a week. Then at the International Hotel, there was a Japanese fellow; we called him Harry. His last name was Nakashima, and I know when the war with Japan broke out, they made Harry leave, and yet he was harmless, a citizen of the United States. But any Japanese—like here in Reno, there used to be a fish market down on Sierra Street, Tom's IT. H. Takeuchi; he was a Japanese fellow. I felt so sorry for him because he was an American citizen, but just because he was Japanese, they sent him to the camp down in Owens [River] Valley. People were very bitter, at that time, against any Japanese people regardless of whether they were citizens or not. There were very strong race relationships at that time.

The Mugurias had a drygoods store. They pronounced it "Mah-geer—uh" in their Basque pronunciation. But the kids at school, I had Jay and Noreen, we always pronounced it "Muh-gwire."

Then the *Reese River Reveille* was our newspaper, put out once a week. When I first went out there, there was a fellow by the name of [Doug] Tandy, who was the editor; he was a little short man. Then a fellow by the name of [William] Thacher, Bull Will Thacher, took over the editing of the newspaper. He's the one that liked to go out for all the social things and activities. He had his nose into everything that anybody was doing in Austin, so he could put it in his newspaper, when Thacher was editor out there.

We had another saloon, the Magnolia Saloon; that's the one Mrs. Martina Aberasturi ran because her husband and her oldest son died, so she took over the running of the saloon. There was that one, and there was one at Hogan's, and there was one at the International. I can't recall going into any other saloons. Schoolteachers weren't allowed to go in there, but when I'd go up to the Aberasturis', their living quarters were upstairs, so we weren't down in the saloon part; we'd be upstairs where their living quarters were. I taught John, Rose, and Mary. Juanita was out of school and the same age as I was. We were good friends and still are. She and Rose live in Reno.

Then there's also a small hotel called the Silver State that Frank Aldapi ran, but we didn't have any social activities there.

And of course, this Clara Gandolfo Williams is still running a bar in Austin. She's part of the Gandolfos. There's still several Gandolfos and still a lot of Dorys around the Austin area.

We also had a red light district in Austin. There was one of the madams that had a place at the bottom of the hill. Of course, this is typical of all mining towns. Then there was another lady that was a real nice person, and she had a beauty shop there. So every week, she always did my hair, shampooed and set my hair, or cut it, whatever it needed. Also the women of the town went there and had her. Of course in the back of the beauty shop was her place of business [laughs]. She was accepted by the community, and after she left, she came into Reno, and she was an instructor at our Reno Beauty College. She finally married a very wealthy man. She was just an ordinary person, and nobody objected and just accepted her.

There's another thing that they used to have out there, they called them a shivaree.

When somebody got married, everybody would shivaree them. Bring a guest, and you'd have an all-night party, and the poor bride and groom couldn't get to bed [laughs]. Somebody was always doing something for them.

### THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

'Course back in 1932 was the time of the Depression, and jobs were hard to get. And I had never been any further than Carson and Fallon. My dad being in the wood-and-coal business, we did take in all the lumbering towns north of town, but as far as knowing anything else about the rest of the state, I didn't know anything.

The department of education said, well, just send applications to every school that you can think of. So the places that my dad took me—to Fallon, and Carson, and Gardnerville, and Minden—were the closest ones around here. I'd sent an application to Austin, and you had to send a picture—and what your qualifications were.

As it happened, I was qualified for this job that—in Austin High School when Olga Laiolo Zunino got married. At that time, if you married, you lost your job. So knowing the principal, having family contact with him through his mother—. Because when my mother immigrated to the United States from Denmark, Henry's mother Stena Nelson was a good friend of my mother's and came from the same community of Ollerup in Denmark. That's why she came to Reno, and we grew up with the Nelson boys. Henry, of course, is a lot older than I am; he was the oldest of the four boys.

Otherwise, it's like any job that you get today; if you have a pull, you get the job. So it's knowing, being at the right place at the right time and who you are, and that's why I happened to get the job in Austin. It was because I knew the principal.

Then when the president of the school board, J. M. Hiskey, was in town, well, I met him at the Golden Hotel. I guess he liked my appearance and my interview because he said that I had the job.

That was about four days before school started, so there had to be a lot of fast moving to get some clothes and get a trunk. In those days people didn't use suitcases; we used trunks and a wardrobe trunk, so it had drawers, and it had a place for your blouses, and a place at the bottom for your shoes. I still have my old wardrobe trunk in the basement. And I used it as a dresser in the old International Hotel. Of course that had to go out on the stage; Hiskey owned the Hiskey Stage Lines.

Then my brother [Edward "Buzz" Madsen] and Henry's brother George, who was the same age I am, took me out to Austin, over all the old dirt roads and summits. 'Course I didn't know what I was getting into, goin' out there. Just one mile east of Austin is exactly the center of the state of Nevada, so it's right in the middle of the state. George, in order to tease me all the way, well, whenever he'd see a shack after we got over Carroll Summit, he'd say, "There's Austin!" And I thought, "Oh, god!" [Laughs] Then we'd go on, and then there's a place out in the middle of the desert called Frenchman's Station that we stopped to have a cool drink, and it was just out there in nowhere. But south of Frenchman's Station, there was a mining camp and the road to lone; there was mining all over that area.

Then of course, by the time we got up into Austin, and it's built into a V canyon, and it seemed like heaven when I got in there to see all of those buildings. It really wasn't as small as I thought it was going to be.

So then when we pulled into the International Hotel, because Neil Easton, who was the owner of the International, was

expecting the schoolteachers—. And there was no lobby; you had to go into the bar that was downstairs and sign the register on the bar, and then go through the door and up a stairway to the upstairs where they had built rooms. When that building was originally used, that second floor was a ballroom; then they converted it into rooms. Kenneth Easton still has the old register.

I think there were six or seven rooms just on one side and furnished with old marble-topped pieces of furniture. Well, in my room, I had a big old brass bed—a four-poster brass bed—and the commode was a marble top, oh, like we would call a nightstand. They did have a washstand in the room; then we had a screen in front of the washstands, and a small table to work on. But that wasn't enough, so anyhow I had the brass bed taken out, and I bought a studio couch to make it look more like a parlor than a bedroom—a living room than a bedroom—and put a screen in front of the washstand. Oh, no clothes closets; all there was was a rod across the corner of the room behind the door with a curtain in front of it, and that's where you hung your clothes. And an old flattop stove that we used to cook on. Our rent was ten dollars a month per room.

We always got our breakfast and lunch in our room at the hotel; then we'd eat our dinner downstairs in the cafe, Harry's Cafe. Harry was a Japanese fellow, and it was the best food in town. But then you get kind of tired of restaurant food all of the time, so we just got so we ate Sunday dinner there. And then we would—the four of us—at that time there was Hazel [Christiansen] and Louise Rawson and Helen Montrose the first year, and myself. Then we got to charging our groceries at the grocery store, the Jack Myles grocery store. If our total bill for all of us was thirty-five dollars a month that was expensive, but divided four ways, our meals were cheap.

We had fourteen-foot ceilings, and the stove had a flat top; it had two holes where you could put your wood and coal in and the bottom part where the ashes fell. I had an old dutch oven that belonged to my mother that she'd given me to use out there. Believe it or not, I could even bake a cake and bake biscuits in that old dutch oven on top of the stove [laughs]. So we were pretty well fed.

The first year I was out there, between Hazel, Louise, and myself, we were going to give a bridge party. At that time when I first went out there, we were playing Auction bridge, so we'd invite all the women from the town to come to the schoolteachers' party. It wasn't until the invitations went out that we found out there were two different factions in town, but everybody was on their best behavior anyhow, and we had no fights. I used my room to store our refreshments that we had sent out from Reno. The kids sneaked in through the back in the hotel; there was a back stairway, and they could come up here. We were playing cards in the other three rooms. They sneaked up the back steps and got into my room and stole all our refreshments.

I had a radio out there although I had to special order it for DC current. I really don't know what station was transmitted out there. I think KOH is our oldest radio station here in Reno; I think that's the one that first originated. But one of the boys out there had made a crystal set that had earphones, and it would pick up the airwaves from one of those old crystal sets. Mine was a small radio, a cathedral type. One night a week—no it couldn't have been every night—with Wayne King; he had the Waltz King orchestra, and we all liked the music.

I don't recall of ever locking our doors at the International because nobody bothered you. We might have locked, but downstairs where the bar was, there was a board up

on the wall with keys on it for the different rooms. If the bar was closed and a salesman came through town—we used to call them drummers in those days—if there was a key hanging up on this board, he would take that key and go to the room. Basically all the keys were alike; just like a master key, they would open any door in the hotel. The locks weren't different; the same key opened every door. Sometimes one of the drummers would come to town and get a key from off the rack and come up and open a door and go in, and here would be someone else sleeping in the room [laughs]. So then they'd take the key and go down to the next room until they found an empty room. Because I don't recall carrying any keys whatsoever except my car keys in my purse after I bought my automobile.

When I was sitting there studying at the International Hotel with my door open, I felt as though somebody was staring at me, and I turned around, and there was a drunken Indian standing in the doorway. My desk was right next to the stove, and I had my iron skillet. I picked it up, and I threw it at him. Whether I hit him or not, I don't know; he disappeared.

When they were resurveying the road, there was [Wayne] Red McLeod, Hoot Gibson, and there was Johnny Lewis, and Ed Cupit. There was also a fellow from Sparks, Judd Dakin. He was the one that taught us how to play Contract bridge. Up until that time we just played Auction bridge, and he knew Contract bridge, so in Hazel's room we had two card tables, so we'd set it up and play cards. We'd go out with the surveyors where they were surveying the road, and we were just part of their gang—"Well, let's take the schoolteachers with us" [laughs].

Since all the rooms were available, if we were at the schoolhouse to a party—they would go into our rooms and short-sheet your

bed and put crackers in there. You'd get all ready for bed and get in, and you could only go half way, and there were crackers smashed all over your bed. Well then, you'd have to unmake your bed, get the sheet out and go out on the veranda and shake all the crumbs out and remake your bed. So only once, they had to do it. But one time I came home, there was cream puffs in my bed. But I always was careful to look first if anybody sneaked into our rooms to shortsheet our beds

Then after the surveyors would have a party, we kept our ironing board out in the hall, and the rooms were in an L shape. They would set our ironing board up there, and go down to the bar -and get all the empty whiskey bottles and gin bottles, beer bottles, anything they could find. Then they would stack up all the bottles and put them in front of the schoolteachers' rooms [laughs]. I have a picture in my album of that; we had moved them out onto the veranda, all the bottles, and took a picture of it because the old cameras didn't have any flash.

The night [George] Baby Face Nelson came to town in '33 when they had all the gangsters in Chicago. Well, anyhow he had a big black bullet-proof car, and he put it across the street at Unc Francis's garage and came in and got a key off the board and came up and had the room right next to me. I happened to be right there in the hail and with his tommy-gun right there, he says, "Good evening," and went on into his room. The walls were paper thin, so I didn't sleep much that night, and I could even hear him snoring, so evidently his conscience didn't bother him [laughs]. Then he came into Reno, and he had some friend over on, it was either Cheney or Moran Street, over in that part of town where he hid out while he was staying here in Reno.

At that time, they started to reactivate the mines. Some mining engineers came out



there. The only ones I remember are Earle Seaborn, Bill Kaiser, Paul Klopstock, Jack Brennen, Don Besack, Don Burgess, and [F.] Sommer Schmidt was superintendent. They used to take the schoolteachers out on weekends, and we'd go down the old broken ladders down into the mines. Nowadays, I'd never even think of it, but we were young and adventurous, so we thought as long as we had the mining engineers with us, they knew what they were doing. People that had moved to town to start reactivating some of these old mines would come to the International Hotel to take their baths. We'd put a big sign on the front of our bathroom. There was just a tub in there; there was no other facilities. We had a washstand in our room, and the toilets were separate. "For Ladies Only"—but the mining engineers and the miners, well, they wouldn't wait for one another for the use of their bathroom; there was only two. So they'd go ahead and sneak in our bathroom and use it, and when we needed a bath, we'd always have to take our bottle of Lysol and scrub it all out.

The year Louise Rawson got the measles, that was our last year at the International Hotel because Neil Easton didn't want to have any germs spread around. I know we'd gone down to Round Mountain to a baseball game. Austin had a real good baseball team, and we used to go down to Round Mountain and Manhattan to the baseball games. One Sunday, Louise broke out with the measles, and some of the students that went along also came down with the measles later. So Mr. Easton said that the next year the schoolteachers would have to find another place to stay.

Also when we went hunting, he objected to us using the hallway upstairs in his hotel to pick and clean our ducks. We made too big a mess.

Then in 1934, they had a big earthquake. Boy, that old hotel really shook. We were in

Louise's room; we'd just finished playing cards and were having some dessert. It started out with a roar before the shaking. Of course, the first thing I thought of was fire, and I thought my stovepipe had fallen down again, but then, the whole building started to shake. What people do when you panic: we could have gone down the front steps and out to the street, but we came down the old stairway out to the side street, where there was no light, so we had to feel our way in the dark to get outside. After we got out there, you could see from the street that there was both vertical and horizontal shaking. The street was just going like this [gesture]. Well, finally it stopped, and we went back to the hotel and back up to our rooms.

Then, there were some more earth tremors; we counted them—there were seventeen that night. We left the hotel because we were scared to death and walked up to the Merrills. Lena got out some blankets, and we just slept on the floor for the rest of the night. The only damage that was done in the schoolhouse was only one crack across the ceiling in the center part of the building; there was no other damage to the schoolhouse as strong as it was. We never did hear whether they had the equipment for the intensity. What do they call that, where they get the intensity of the shock?—[seismograph].

I say there was very little crime in Austin, maybe just a few drunks occasionally. I don't recall of any serious crimes, and most everybody left their doors unlocked; nobody bothered anybody or went in and stole anything. We never had anything missing.

#### **LITTLE CAESAR**

I didn't have a car the first year I was out there. In fact I didn't know how to drive a car. It was the normal thing to do when you

were eighteen years old to go down to the courthouse, and you paid a dollar, and you got your driver's license. I was within walking distance of all the schools and I was never interested in driving. When I was a senior in college, and I was doing my student teaching at the Southside school (which was south of Reno), it was quite a hike from the University to the Southside school, so my sister Mildred drove, and she'd come and pick me up when I got through. She said, "You'd better start learning how to drive," so I'd get behind the wheel and get it shifted, jerk, and I'd drive to Sparks and back home. That's about all the experience I had; I never did care about driving.

So whenever I had to come into town, my dad sent my brother out to Austin to pick me up and bring me in Friday after school: then he'd have to take me back Sunday. It was a good four or five hours' drive to go out to Austin in those days. So it was in the spring of '33 in March when my mother and dad were going to have their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. I couldn't get out of school early to catch the Hiskey Stages, and they didn't run on weekends anyhow, so I was the only one in the family that wasn't going to be home for the party. So my mother sent my brother out to get me, but he said he refused to take me back.

Louise Rawson and I came in together with my brother, and they had the party Sunday night, and they had their dinner dance at the Century Club. We didn't dare have a cocktail of any kind because my dad said that I could have his Chevy coupe, a '32 model, to drive back to Austin. Well, Louise didn't know anything about driving and I knew very little, so we left the party at nine-thirty at night and headed for Austin on that Sunday night. Believe it or not though, we made it; I got into Austin at three o'clock in the morning. We only met one car going over Carroll Summit.

My dad said, "Now, when you get out there, just put the car in Lee Maestretti's garage until you come in and bring the car back to me." Well, since I had a car, I thought I was a big shot, and I just left the car in front of the hotel that night. First thing in the morning, I had to get the car out and drive it up the old road to the schoolhouse. Instead of walking, I drove the car. So that's where I learned how to drive, was in Austin and all the old dirt roads.

Then on weekends, I took the car and drove all up and down the valley—that was in March—and I didn't come home until school was out in June. I kept my dad's car out there all that time [laughs], and of course, he didn't come out and get it. It was just his extra business car, so it really wasn't that big a deal. I used to be like any other teenager, the faster I could drive, the better I liked it 'cause it was a new experience for me.

So that's why, that summer I bought my own car, when I bought "Little Caesar," a 1933 DeLuxe Plymouth sports coupe with a rumble seat—only cost nine hundred dollars new. So then I had my own transportation. I borrowed the money from my father, and I took a trip—it only cost a hundred and twenty dollars to take a ship from San Francisco through the canal to New York. For twenty-six days, we had several stops; it was a nice big ship. I loved Cuba and would like to see it again. In fact, one of the girls that I'd met on that ship, I still write to once a year. When we docked in New York, we stayed there for a week, and our hotels only cost us two dollars a night for a room with a double bed. We spent a week in seeing the sights of New York, and the Empire State Building, and the Statue of Liberty, and anything else that was exciting around there. Then we took the bus and went down to Baltimore, and I had an aunt and three cousins living there,

so we visited with them for a couple of days and went on to Washington, D. C. We spent a week in Washington, D. C. and took in all the sights there.

Then we took a bus to Pittsburgh up to Detroit. My brother and George Nelson met us. My mother wouldn't let us take the car right off the assembly line at the plant unless it was checked over first. So my brother and George hitchhiked to Detroit and met us there. When I picked my car up at the factory because it was a lot cheaper—you saved your freight across the country at that time—my brother took the car over to the service station and checked it all over, and in checking it he found out that they forgot to put in the globes in the headlights. If we were out after dark, I wouldn't have had any lights. It's the only thing that I could remember that they made a mistake on. Then my sister and I drove to Niagara Falls.

Because in going through the plant, they put out around 1,875 cars in a twenty-four-hour shift. Just all these people standing in line: one putting on a bolt, the next one tightening it up. The women that worked there did the fine wiring under the dashboard. Then the frame and wheels were added. Then they ran it up on a platform and gunned the motor for a while, and it was sent out on the lot. How fast they put them together was just astounding.

I named it "Little Caesar" because Caesar conquered the world, and my car was going to conquer the world. It was a Plymouth deluxe sport coupe with a rumble seat, and I had dual fender wells, so I always had two spare tires, being out there in the desert. That's the first thing my dad taught me how to do was change a tire. Because one time in growing up, there were a bunch of Danish people here in the community, and we were all going out to Pyramid Lake on a picnic. We had a

1918 Dodge touring car, and I don't know how many flat tires my poor father had, and patching tires to get out to Pyramid Lake. We finally ended up even borrowing tires from some of the other people. That's why my dad insisted that I get a car with two spare tires.

So by having a rumble seat, you'd be surprised how many people we could get into that to go out to the different creeks on picnics and fishing trips. Then the next year when Elsie Seaborn came out in '34, she had a Ford coupe, but it didn't have a rumble seat. She named her car "Katie." So between our two cars, well, we could pile in quite a few kids and people to go out in the creek areas.

One experience that we didn't live through too long was Elsie's father, Mr. [E. J.] Seaborn, had come out to Austin to get us and take us into Reno. We didn't get too many miles out of town when a rod broke in the engine of the car, and we had to walk from the broken-down car into Frenchman's Station. There was an old pickup truck that the owner had and he brought Elsie and I back to Austin. Everybody was there laughing, "Well, the schoolteachers didn't get very far out of town because their car broke down." So we never got to Reno that weekend.

It was the winter of '33 and '34 when we were snowed in for fourteen days. I used to have some pictures that were taken of snowplows trying to open up Carroll Summit. Our diet was mostly beans and macaroni but we survived.

Now, the process of meat today is always aged, but whenever the grocery store in Austin ran out of meat—. Two or three times I'd gone down to the Malloy ranch. A fellow goes out, and he gets a shotgun, and he shoots the steer between the eyes. Then he runs out and slashes his throat and takes his tail and pumps and bleeds him. He drug him into the barn, put him on a winch, and lifted him up,



skinned him, cleaned him, quartered him. After he had done all that, we put it in the car, drove into Austin, went to the grocery store—the Austin Commercial Store, it was. The butcher would cut it up, and it would be ready for sale. That's how quick they got rid of their meat.

We always got laughed at with our riding clothes. When my dad first started the fuel business here in Reno, he had horses, so we grew up riding horses. In fact, I was eight years old before he had his first automobile. It wasn't until the Model T came out before he bought a Model T Ford truck. But in those days we wore the regular jodhpurs that were wide at the hip and tapered down, and our English riding boots, and we always wore a white tailored shirt and a vest and a hat, and we had a tie. That's how we dressed in our city riding clothes. It didn't take me too long to get used to a pair of jeans and a plaid shirt because everyone would laugh at the fancy riding clothes that the schoolteachers wore. But even at that, we used to wear them for hiking and skiing. We wore those jodhpurs and our hiking boots all the time.

We used to get in the car on Sunday and drive over to Eureka. I think Eureka was about seventy, eighty miles from Austin, just to have a Sunday dinner and then come back. Of course if we weren't back by a certain time, there was always some of the townspeople out there looking for the schoolteachers. We were like their own children; we were a constant worry to them whenever we took off.

The telephone company from Ely, Ted Brown was the repairman, and he'd come to Austin once a month to repair the telephones, and they were not regular poles but just tree limbs that held the lines out to all the different ranches around the valleys. Instead of following the road, Ted would come to town, and he says, "Come on, let's go out and

repair the telephones." So we'd just follow the old dirt and sagebrush, follow the telephone lines, so he could check them to see if there was any place to repair. There again, if we were late coming back to town, well—'course they knew the teachers were safe with Ted Brown, but they didn't know if we'd break down out in the desert.

When we went to the sheep camps, they used the old iron dutch ovens, but what they would do was to dig a hole and burn either the sagebrush and limbs and stuff, and get a lot of hot coals. Then in one dutch oven, we'd make a big mutton stew, and in the other dutch oven we'd make the Basque bread. We'd put the two covered dutch ovens down in the hole and throw dirt over it; then go off and herd the sheep and ride the donkeys. When we came back, well, we'd dig out the dutch ovens, and the meal was all cooked. The stew was real tasty, and the bread had risen and baked, and nothing was ever burned.

We always had to watch out for woodticks because out there, there were a lot of woodticks around the sagebrush and around the sheep camp. Most of the time, we went up to Smith Creek because that's where Mendiguren had a sheep camp; he was another Spanish Basque.

When the surveyors and the mining engineers were around, we went up to Skull Creek and Kingston Canyon, several times deer hunting. We'd go further down Smokey Valley to the Schmidtlein ranch, and they had the best orchard of winter apples, and we'd always get a big box of apples from the Schmidtleins. There was also Big Creek, and Smith Creek where we'd go to the sheep camp.

We'd go down to Round Mountain; they'd started opening up the placer mining at Round Mountain. Placer mining is like hydraulic mining where you have the force of water in a hose, and they wash it down. Then it goes through a sluicer, and the dirt

is removed, and the gold stays at the bottom. There was a small smelter out there because I have a picture of Hazel and I holding a fifteen-thousand-dollar gold brick that they had made in one of their forms.

We went on picnics on weekends; we'd get our housework done, and our wash. On Sundays we'd put a bottle of soda pop and a sandwich in our back pockets. Being so hilly, we thought nothing of walking up to the top of the hills, any place that we wanted to go. Maybe that's why I stayed so thin, because I did so much walking. We walked in the evening; we'd get through dinner, and it was still daylight. We'd walk down to the bottom of the grade and back, or we'd walk over to Stokes [Castle] and back, or we'd walk up the canyon past the Malloy house up Austin grade. Of course during the week constantly we were walking up to the schoolhouse and back, almost every night.

On the way out to the Potts' ranch [Smokey Valley], there was what we called the Devil's Punchbowl. It looked like a large morning glory flower with different mineral colors in it, and we'd sit on the edge of this punch bowl and have a picnic because at that time—all these places, they're all fenced in now. Stokes Castle is fenced in, and the punch bowl; everything is because of vandalism. But everything was out in the open there, and you never heard of anybody falling into anything.

Then the government sent out a geological survey crew one year. They were going to survey all the geology structure of the area. One weekend, they had cars, and we had our cars, and we took out from Austin. We were going to the Lehman Caves over south of Ely, over next to Baker. We took a picnic lunch with us and drove over to the Lehman Caves, and there was nobody there; it was closed. Of course at that time, you had to have a flashlight to go in. There was no organized

path; you just went in with all the stalactites and stalagmites. So unto this day I never did get to the Lehman Caves. All the other times I'd go, we knew a fellow by the name of Don Lee, who owned a radio station in Los Angeles and owned the Cleveland ranch south of Ely. We became friendly with him, so whenever we'd go down that direction, we'd always stop at the Cleveland ranch, and that's as far as we got. Then the next day we'd get up and have an early breakfast and help them herd the cattle out on the range, then drive clear back to Austin that night.

One time we'd ridden so far herding the cattle—I know that a couple of surveyors had the wagon full of grain and food to take out on the range, and the rest of us were all riding horses. We had ridden so far, and I was getting so tired and saddle burned. Finally, I spotted the wagon coming, and I hailed them. So I finally got Ed Cupit to ride my horse back to the ranch, and I rode the wagon; I'd had it. I couldn't even sit down to teach school the next day.

Skiing, the first time it snowed, we all had skis. They were about eight feet long and about an inch thick, real heavy mahogany skis with just a toe strap. They were heavy to carry. We'd go up to the top of Austin Summit, and there was a big hill. When I was there four or five years ago, we drove up there to see what the size of that hill was where we used to ski. It's surprising how we could walk from the bottom to the top and then ski down. There were no ski lifts. Then we'd come back to the hotel, and Kenny Easton, who was Neil Easton's son, would go down to the bar and fix the schoolteachers a drink to warm up after a full day of skiing [laughs].

At that time, there were only the elementary children who lived in town attended the Austin school. There was the Willow Creek school and the Dory school and—I forgot

the one that was up Reese River. There were several country schools, and that's why they had a district superintendent because she had to go to all these country schools and give tests because they taught one through eighth grade in those schools.

The one that was closest to where we were was the Dory ranch. The schoolhouse on the Dory ranch, every once in a while they have a dance, and everybody would go out there to the party. The one-man band would play the drums and play the fiddle, and we'd do our Virginia Reel and Vesuvianne.

Most of our horseback riding too was out at the Dory ranch. When we had time, I'd go out there because I loved to horseback ride, between the Dory ranch and over at the Cleveland ranch. Then, I'd go a few times down to the Walsh ranch and the O'Tooles, but most of the time it was the other places.

We always had to be wary of rattlesnakes whenever we went anywhere. We'd go out with the mining engineers and the surveyors for target practicing. We all became pretty good shots, and I shot several rattlesnakes because I always cut the rattle off. I know in my trunk in the top drawer, I had a little box that I would put the rattles in. Of course, over the period of years, I threw all that away.

### THE BIRD CAGE

The Bird Cage got its name, I suppose, because of the size of it. The mining engineers called it the Squirrel Cage. It was owned by George Thorpe, who was also the mortician, and it was originally the morgue. He charged us twenty dollars a month rent for it. Off the kitchen there was a kind of a deep room in there which I presume at one time they used to keep the bodies before he embalmed them. We used that for our wood and coal storage for our two stoves and also for our desert

cooler because we had no refrigerator in those days. Anything that we had that had to be kept cool, we kept back in that hole.

It was a two-level house built up against a hillside, so the second story was ground level and the first story was ground level. On the first floor was the kitchen to the left and the living room to the right and a narrow stairway going up the center. Since it went up the center, underneath the stairway he had put in a bath where we just had a tub and a toilet, no washstand except for a pan that we had on an orange crate. If one of us got unexpected company and was in the living room and somebody was in the bathroom, they had to stay in the bathroom until the company left [laughs].

In the corner of the living room there was a potbellied stove, and we kept the fire banked in that all night because there was a big terra cotta pipe going from the stove through the bedroom that Louise and I shared, so it helped keep our room warm. The other bedroom upstairs, the one Elsie had, she had a little stove in there; we used to call it the "peanut toaster." She would keep that banked, so her room [was] kept warm. The reason we let Elsie have a room by herself was because she's the one that always stayed up late and then slept in until noon on Saturday and Sunday, so she didn't like to be disturbed. But otherwise, we never had any fights; we all got along beautifully.

The kitchen, we had an old-fashioned wood and coal stove and an old-fashioned sink. We did have hot and cold running water, and there was just a small table. So it was very sparsely furnished, but it was comfortable.

Whoever got carried away with the paint job in the living room and dining room—we had a pink ceiling; then half the walls were blue, and the bottom half were green. So we had quite a color combination. The

living room was the same thing, so you saw the combination of colors. But the upstairs bedrooms, Elsie's was green, and Louise and mine was blue, so probably the paint he had left over is what he used downstairs.

Also the entrance to the house, if you opened the door, the door swung into the left, and if you had groceries in your arm, you had to walk up a few steps up the stairway to close the door to get into the kitchen.

As far as I can remember, there were no wall switches. I know that in the living room there was a pull chain in the middle of the room where you had to feel in there and try and find the chain to turn the light on. But I can't recall in the rest of the house, and of course, power was so expensive there that we generally ate by candlelight for our dinners in the evening to keep down our power bill.

We weren't pestered as much in this house as we were in the International Hotel because we were less available there, so we had very few tricks played on us. They always had turkey raffles, and if somebody was a friend of ours that won the turkey, they always brought it over to the teachers to cook. We had a dinner, and then of course, the wine was always brought by the guest.

I remember one incident [with] Kenneth Easton, whose father owned the International Hotel. I had him in high school three or four years; I think he came as a freshman when I was out there. He's third generation Austin because his grandfather is the one that moved the International Hotel from Virginia City to Austin. After the night of graduation, well, here comes all these kids to the house afterwards, and they wanted a party. Kenny said, "I've been wanting to call you 'Evie' all this time, and now I can." He said, "You're through teaching here, and I'm through high school." He's called me Evie ever since; even when I see him now, it's Evie.

We had male visitors. When the mining engineers were there, they came. There was no objection to having them. We'd play cards, or visit, or listen to the radio. We'd cook dinner for them, but there were no drunken parties, anything like that. It was just a regular social evening. Most every Saturday night, there was either a dance at the schoolhouse or at Hogan's Hall or a movie, so we were generally up late on Saturday nights.

Then depending on weather what we did on Sunday. Sometimes, I always liked to be out in the open, and I liked to go. There was always somebody going duck hunting or deer hunting, going on a picnic. Elsie generally slept in most of the time, but Louise and I would go on all the picnics. In the wintertime, we'd go skiing every weekend, walk up to the top of the hill, and we skied all winter long. No ski lifts in those days.

We didn't have too many close neighbors, just that one house next door to the Bird Cage; otherwise, on this side there was a road going up the hill to the schoolhouse. In the front there was an old shed where they kept the hearse.

I happened to think of that family's name that lived next door that had six children, and she was expecting another baby. The schoolteachers sent into Reno and got everything that was necessary for a layette. Because the father was killed that year in some kind of accident, she was there all alone with these children, and her name was Leigh. A couple of the children were born with a hare lip, and we had quite a time understanding them when they were in school because of their disability.

The front yard of the Bird Cage was really a mess, so we had to get out there and clean up the old oil drums. Raking and digging down, we had to dig up these old mining parts that got eroded under the soil. In front of that was

an old building that faced the street, and that's the one that they kept the horse-drawn hearse in. They still used that when I was out there whenever they had a funeral. It was a big black ebony hearse with glass sides on it, and it was horse-drawn down to the cemetery.

There was a water shortage that year [1935]. The three years that we were at the International, there was no water shortage, but my last year there was. So, fortunately, having a bathtub, we could scrub it out and fill it with water and use it for our necessities. On Wednesday and Saturday, they turned the water on, so we only got a bath twice a week. We had to boil the water for drinking and boil the water for cooking. Since it had been sitting in the bathtub, well, we had to be careful with our water situation.

On Saturday, we had an Indian woman called Ruthie come over to clean our house; she generally came with her mother and a baby, and they would sit outside in the yard while she cleaned. The reason we got her to come and clean is because so much was expected of the teachers. We were up at the schoolhouse every night either working on the school annual or the newspaper; then I had my adult-education class. Then we had our play practice at night. Of course, you probably wonder how we managed with our homework and our preparation. We had to do all that at school before we left, and there was no clock watching. When we got our work done, well then, we'd walk down the hill and get our dinner. We didn't dash out at three-thirty or four o'clock, but we stayed until we were through.

George Thorpe had to fix up this building for the schoolteachers because Neil Easton didn't want the teachers in his hotel any more. They caused too much trouble, and especially the time that Louise broke out with the measles. That was the last straw. But then

that last year when Hazel Christiansen took a job in Elko, there was a fellow by the name of Floyd Smalley, who replaced her in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. He stayed at the International Hotel his first year; in his second year, he and another fellow took a little house. But being a man, Neil Easton didn't seem to object to him.

I don't know if I mentioned before that whenever I took a trip into Reno, I always brought sacks of wood and coal back on all the fenders of my car because wood and coal was expensive in Austin. Since my dad owned a wood-and-coal company here in Reno, we didn't have to pay for it.

Another thing about living in Austin, you could get general things; there was a general merchandise store. And Edith Givens had a little novelty store where you could get newspapers, magazines, and odds and ends. But prescriptions, we had to send into Reno for, or any parties that we gave, and any party clothes, we got in Reno or San Francisco,



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## AUSTIN'S SCHOOL

### PERSONNEL AND STRUCTURE

The school building was originally built in 1930, and I went out there in 1932, so it was a fairly new building. At that time there were only three high school teachers: the principal, who was a teaching principal, and myself, and then the English and language teacher. There were three elementary teachers: one had the first, second, and third grade; the other one had the fourth, fifth, and sixth; and the other one had the seventh and eighth. So it was all in the same compound.

It was just a one story, and in the center of the building was a multipurpose room and study hall, a small stage on one end. Then the basement was similar with the showers and lavatories for boys and girls. There was the home ec [economics] department and the science department. The principal taught small science classes.

The year before I went out there, there was a home ec teacher, but when she left, well, the four years I was there, we didn't have a home ec teacher, so we'd just use that

room when the teachers had any mending to do. We had no sewing machine, so we'd go to the schoolhouse. We all had a key to the schoolhouse, so we could go up there weekends and do any sewing, mending that we had to do.

The bell for the high school section was just a buzzer in the drawer of the desk in the study hall. It wouldn't disturb the elementary school section. The outside bell was on the roof and a rope in the principal's office. The janitor usually pulled that to let the kids in town know they had ten minutes to make it in time.

In the center downstairs was a big open space where in inclement weather, we took the kids down there for indoor P.E., just with different types of games and exercises. There was Chase-the-Fox, circle games or relays, where the students would line up into teams, and we'd just take a basketball, and it'd go under the feet of one and over the back one, and then the end one would have to run up in front, so it didn't take up too much room—and then regular calisthenics. I can't remember all



the indoor games, but we always had plenty of indoor games for them to play. Also when we had school dances, the dances were upstairs while we'd set tables up downstairs for buffet suppers. So the whole building was utilized. Sometimes we had box lunches at our dances and they were auctioned off. The boys always tried to find out who brought the boxes and would bid on their girlfriends'.

Now, there was no gym. There were two stairways going into the building, one on each end. We had to walk down the hill, and there was a big field where we had baseball and volleyball games when the weather was good. So that was the only activity. The year I left in '36, behind my room, there's a hill, and they were starting to excavate in there to build a gym which is still in use today. They started that in the fall of '36. So they used that and had basketball the next year, but when I was there, there was no inside gym.

We had yard duty, and the kids were out on the playground. That's just common procedure; all the years of teaching I had, there's always yard duty.

Then our senior students also were entitled—even though we had no competitive physical education program—they were always given a Block A sweater. Now you have to earn them through competitive training in order to get a block sweater.

On the first floor, the two rooms to the south, one room was first, second, and third grade, and the other one was the fourth, fifth, and sixth. And on the other end of the building was two classrooms, and one was for the seventh and eighth, and the other room was the English and language department. Then across the east side of the building was the room used for the history class, and then the principal's office, and then my room which was the commercial room. I had all my equipment in there, but when I taught a

history class, I took my books into the other room. Then in the center was like a large multipurpose room that was used for study hall and school plays and dances. There was a small stage on one end, a bookcase for books on the end.

Our library was very small there, with just one bookcase. They were allowed only five dollars a teacher; with only six teachers and a book at that time cost about a dollar and a half, so that's why our library couldn't grow because of the small budget. Before any book was put on the library shelf, the teachers had to read them all and censor them. If there was anything in it that we objected to, they didn't keep the book.

Now our first contracts were \$1500 a year, and that was big money at that time. I didn't get my contract until when school started because they didn't have one here in Reno, but during the interview I was told I would get \$1500 a year. We were at that time only on nine months' contract; you didn't have your contract divided by twelve, your contract was divided by nine. So we got no pay during the summer months, and that was kind of tough because you had to budget yourself to save so much each month to carry you through the summer months. Then also on the contract it said, "Do you smoke or drink?" Of course, none of us did much at that time.

I know when I first started teaching here in Reno in '37, that we were on nine months contract, and there was no money during the summer. Then I was on our salary committee for our—originally Reno Classroom Teachers Association. That's when we got the school board to divide our contracts by twelve instead of by nine, so we would have the same amount of pay the year around, even though you'd already earned that money. That's why the controversy whenever the teachers wanted a raise in pay, they'd say, "Well, I don't know why



they should, they get paid during the summer and for all their vacations.” But being on a contract basis, and that’s what was hard to get the people in the community to understand that we were on contract. Basically, when school was out in June, we were unemployed until September, yet we were not eligible for unemployment. So then when we did talk the school board into dividing it by twelve, but later on when there was so much controversy, and we went to the school board meeting and said, well, in order to settle this problem if we could go back to the nine months. But then it was too late because the state legislature had already passed the law to appropriate so much money every quarter to the schools, so it would throw their quarter system off by going back. So that’s why it’s always remained under twelve months payment.

We didn’t pay any income tax. Teachers were exempt from income tax until Roosevelt came in. Then when Roosevelt came in, well, everybody was taxed. At that time there was a very high unemployment like there is here now too. Roosevelt started what was called the CCC camps, Civilian Conservation Corps. That’s what Roosevelt started for employment. Out at Kingston Canyon there was a CCC camp, and they did all the environmental work in all the canyons and creeks, cleaned things up, took out dead trees. I know that there were two or three boys that came to that camp from Florida, and they were real nice kids. They weren’t just kids off the streets; they were kids that wanted a job. They were good workers, and we had always invited them to our school activities and were part of the community. We had no problems with them at all.

Later after that came the WPA that Roosevelt had come in with unemployment. That’s how our Virginia Lake in Reno was built. There was no equipment used; it was all

hand labor, but it was to help unemployment—what Reagan is trying to do now, to put some of these people to work repairing the dams and roads and other projects that need it to bring down the unemployment. It’s the same principle as Roosevelt did.

The only thing that was taken out of our check was five dollars towards our retirement, the state retirement fund.

When we were in Austin, we had Teachers’ Institute, once a year for a week. In our district the institute was in Winnemucca, and the school board paid our expenses. After the first year, I had my own car, and I could have driven from Austin to Battle Mountain to Winnemucca. But since the school board paid our expenses, they wouldn’t approve of that, so I had to drive into Reno and leave my car at home. Then we took the train from Reno to Winnemucca [laughs] which is the long way around, but that was their rules and regulations.

We’d have all our different meetings in Winnemucca, and I know there was a dance studio there and got some new ideas, since I was teaching dancing at that time to the students for our programs. I also started a preschool; on Saturday I had preschool dancing class. I was using the room up at the schoolhouse, and the school board made me stop because I was making too much money. I couldn’t use the schoolhouse any more, so I dropped my program. The parents were unhappy about it, but I had no control over that.

Our meetings in Winnemucca were just general improvement. I’d go to the commercial meetings; then we’d have banquets. We’d always meet our principal for lunch, and he was always fun to be with, and we always had a good time with our principal.

The school board, none of them ever came up to visit the school; they were there for

social activities. But Mr. [J. M.] Hiskey was president of the Nevada Central Railroad—or general manager I guess he was because [J. G. Phelps] Stokes was president, and he also ran the Hiskey Stage Lines that brought passengers and freight from Reno to Ely. He had the stage lines. Of course, Neil Easton was too busy running his hotel and bar. LeRoy Cassidy was the other member. He is still living.

We had the cutest little lady that kept our rooms clean at the International. Mrs. Pinana, and she was so good to the teachers there that anything we wanted she got for us. Adele Maestretti worked as a waitress down in Harry's Cafe, so she was busy. But as far as the school board interfering with any of the activities of the teachers, they left it up to the principal; everything was under control of the principal.

Whenever the principal was out of town, I was the acting principal, so anything that came up, well, the kids had to see me about it. Of course, they were always on their good behavior because they knew that if they did anything wrong I'd report it to the principal, and they'd be punished. So I never had any problems when I had to be acting principal. I know the year that he was finishing up his master's degree at UCLA, he had to leave two weeks before school was out, so I had to give all his students their finals and grade all the papers and do all the final reports and see that the schoolhouse was all closed up for the summer. Then when his wife had a baby, he was out of town for a week, so I had to take over then. They had state principals' conferences here in Reno; I had to take over then, but I never had any problems—.

Now Sheila Parker [Rast] was only there two years, and then she married Hubert Rast. They left Austin and went to Sierraville. Then that was the year that Helen Montrose took

Sheila's place in the English department, and she was only there one year. She was from Bridgeport, so she went back to Bridgeport and got married. I don't remember too much about Helen; she was a good English teacher, but she didn't participate too much in all the activities we used to do on the weekends. She'd go on a picnic once in a while, but she didn't associate too much.

Dollyruth Crowell had her mother and an aunt to take care of, so I couldn't recall of anything other than the school activities that she attended because she was more or less tied down at home. Hazel Christiansen was a girl from Lincoln, Nebraska. She had taught in Boulder, Colorado, and she got a better salary in Austin; that's why she came to Austin because the salary was better. She was a very shy person to begin with, but between Louise Rawson and I, well, we had her doing just as many of the crazy things that we did. She was the third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher.

Helen was only there one year; and Elsie Seaborn replaced her. Now, she graduated from the University in '33, but that was the year that there was a lot of trouble with the banks. Her father was state bank examiner, so she went to Reno Business College for a year.

That was the first year I was there in '32 because we got paid in September and October. And I had sent my dad half of my paycheck to put into what was at that time known as the Washoe County Bank to save, so I could live through the summer. It was that weekend of Halloween and Admission day, on the thirty-first of October, and on the first of November that's when it came on a Monday, probably. Anyhow that weekend, the banks in the state of Nevada closed. They were all owned by George Winfield. Those that got wind of it got their money out, but the majority of the people didn't, including me and my little bit of savings. That was all

gone when the banks went broke, but it was a few years later, we did get fifty percent of what we had had in savings after the banks got back on their feet again. My father also lost all his money.

So we didn't get any paychecks until later in the spring, before they got the bank situation straightened out. Then I had to pay my father back the money I had borrowed from him.

But I know that's why Elsie came to Austin because there wasn't the antagonism there in Austin as there was with some of the other larger communities in the state over the closing of the banks. And her dad had always felt that they would hold that against Elsie because her dad was state bank examiner.

In the year '35 to '36, my last year in Austin, we only had fourteen students in the high school. That last year Floyd Smalley came out to teach; he took Hazel Christiansen's place because she went out to Elko to teach. And Floyd Smalley, who was eventually superintendent of schools in Mineral County, is retired now and living here in Reno. He lived at the International Hotel; he had a girlfriend, Alma, who is his wife now. Even when he was coming into Reno and we'd ask him for a ride, he'd always hesitate a bit about taking the women teachers into Reno. Since he was the only man teacher out there, he didn't know whether there'd be any jealousy or not.

Also, at that time we had what was known as the district superintendent, and she came out once in the late fall semester and in the late spring semester to test all our students because at that time there was a state examination; otherwise, it was the teacher's fault. We had no examination to follow; all we had was a course of study. The state put out a course of study, and you had to follow that for what you were to accomplish for the year.

[In Commercial] they had to type at least 65 words a minute, and 125 words a minute in shorthand. Now 125 in a minute is not too many words considering the short form. You just concentrated on it. But to get 65 words a minute typing was—you really had to be accurate.

Three errors was all they were allowed in their typing. Cause I know we were all a nervous wreck when Florence Peacocke came to town. Of course, we'd always tell the kids that they really had to study because they had two state tests to pass; otherwise, they wouldn't get promoted to the next grade. Of course, they were more strict with the elementary school than they were with the high school curriculum because all the elementary students had to learn how to read and write and their arithmetic. That was their basics, the three R's.

## **COURSES AND ACTIVITIES**

Well, it [the Commercial room] was a real nice light room in the east of the building with about four big large windows, and we had steam heat in the room, so we were always comfortable. I used Underwood typewriters because I guess that's what I liked. Some of the older ones I had replaced with Underwood because that's where I got most of my training was on Underwood typewriters, although I had used Smith Corona and Remington. I had my set of typing books; I had a nice desk, and I had a big chart of the keyboard of the typewriter in the front of the room. had a big work table. If I averaged eight to ten students as a class, well, we could use my great big table on the side when I taught my shorthand lessons. And I always set a timer, so then the kids would know what their speed was in both typing and shorthand.

I always worked towards accuracy rather than speed; I think that was from my own experience in high school. When I first started taking typing, my first teacher worked for speed and not accuracy, so I could type, but I made a lot of mistakes. The second year I had typing, I had a teacher with the opposite theory. Almost made a nervous wreck out of me because she wouldn't accept any mistakes, and I'd have to do the whole page over again. We weren't allowed to use an eraser, and they didn't have erasable paper in those days. You just had to learn; I think being under that pressure of accuracy and totally knowing your keyboard without looking is what made me a good typing teacher. I carried out the same theories in my classroom: that speed would take care of itself, if you're accurate.

Two years I was there—two out of the four years—I brought my students in to Reno to the Reno Business College for state contests, and they always did real well in comparative to the size of the school. One year we took a second place, and I thought my students did real good. Then my shorthand class, I took them down to the courthouse. Whenever there was a trial that came up, well, I taught them court reporting, and they'd have to take all their notes in court reporting shorthand because there's a difference. I taught the beginning students regular shorthand and my advanced students advanced shorthand. And there're so many shortcuts, you know, like when they asked "What is your name?" Well, "what is your name" is just "ooh-t-s-na." So that's why they could keep up with the speed of the speaker because of all of these shortcuts in shorthand. Of course, now they use all machines, but that way in those days, they had to take everything down in shorthand [laughs]. But it was fun, and the kids loved doing it, to go down to the courthouse. That gave them good experience because there

they were in an actual atmosphere. And at that time, who was the judge out there? He was the fellow that used to be from Eureka. Judge [Edgar] Eather was the judge; he was a nice old guy.

There were a lot of schools that didn't put out a yearbook, but I decided we were going to put out a mimeographed one [*Castelleja*], correlating with the English department. There's no art department, so we just worked up our own art. The English teacher was generally pretty good, or we had a student who was pretty good at art to draw pictures. We started on that the first part of the year and kept up a calendar that we could write a diary.

And the students wrote stories and composed poetry and any anecdotes. The back part was with jokes, humor, and one year we had won second place in the United States for the best mimeographed yearbook.

In looking through the old ones I have here, I was surprised what beautiful poetry those children could compose and the stories they had written. I really enjoyed going through those that I hadn't looked at in years. What we could accomplish from students, you know, in a small community; their creativity, what you could draw out of them.

Then the students got the bright idea that we should put out a newspaper. Of course, most of this work had to be done at night in the school building on top of a hill. By the time you walked up the hill in the morning, you walked down after school; then there is always something at night. You had to walk back up at night and then back down at night—how many times you had to walk up and down that hill.

The kids had no jobs, no outside activity, so it was good for them to work on a night project. So we got this newspaper, and we called it the *Chatterbox*. I'm sorry I didn't save any copies of it because I'd like to remember

what we put in the *Chatterbox*. It was only put out once a month; first Friday of the month. I think the kids had to pay ten cents for it because we mimeographed it. We probably put in anecdotes of different students and activities that took place and jokes and poetry and stories—the same format that you would put in a school annual.

Of course, through that, we had a press club. The ones in charge, the president of the press club then would come into Reno because the University of Nevada had a press club convention once a year. All the students from the outlying area would come into Reno to get new ideas on publications. So we even started that back in those days. One year, Marjory Hiskey and Noreen Muguria came in.

We did handbills; when we advertised for a school dance, we always worked up a handbill and then stuck them in the windows of all the stores in town, and when we were going to have a school play. Sometimes the principal would have reports that he had to get out more than one copy. Well, rather than use carbon copies—you could only get about five good carbons at that time—I would just type up a stencil and run it off on the mimeograph. So it was used for anything that was necessary. The community never used it; it was strictly for school activities.

The schoolhouse was the center of most activities and meetings. They had dances there, at least once a month, and then we had to tend to the decorating. One year we had it decorated in a Japanese theme, and we sent in to Reno to get the material we needed. The spring dance was always like a garden. We had trellises and made paper flowers. Of course, our Halloween dance, we'd had a pumpkin and corn stalks. So for each occasion, each month, whatever the holiday was, we had a dance, and the room was decorated for that.

There was a charge too for the dance, so we could make money for our school activities. Everybody around the valley and in town attended the dance. The schoolteachers had to have their duty dances with any of the dignitaries that were around. And anyone who asked you to dance, you didn't dare say "no," even if they stepped all over your feet. Bert and Millie Acree was the band out there for years. In fact, Bert Acree just died a few years ago. He played the drums, and Millie played the piano. Then at one time, their son, Tom, used to play the saxophone, but Tom was unfortunately killed in an accident. So they generally had the drums and the piano, and they could really put out the music.

I would classify the dignitaries as the district attorney, who was Howard Browne and county treasurer was Mr. [C. F.] Littrell; Bert Acree was the recorder; Lena Streshley [McLeod] was the county clerk.

I can't remember of having too many politicians during elections come out to Austin. Although there were lodges; there was a Masonic lodge, and there was a Veterans of Foreign Wars lodge out there. But we were never included in any of those affairs. I was only twenty-one years old at that time and not too interested in politicians. At that age, you know, you don't make a study of it.

Now our school dances were always formals, moneymaking projects. The Acree orchestra played. Did you ever do a broom dance? Oh, the broom dances were fun. Everybody was partnered, but of course, there'd be one, either a man or a woman. When the music would stop, everybody changes partners, and there's one person dancing with a broom. You drop the broom, and you grab a partner; then there's always one left who has to pick up and dance with the broom. That was always fun. We always did the Virginia Reel and the Vesuvienne. We



didn't do any square dancing. It was rounds and the Virginia Reel and the Vesuvienne. We always had a girl's choice dance, so instead of the men to come to ask the girls for a dance, the girls had a chance. Of course, if a certain girl wanted a certain boy, and he didn't want to dance with that girl, it would really raise quite a confusion. But nobody turned anybody down.

In our school, we had freshman initiation; we always had to initiate the eighth graders coming into high school. They would have to come dressed up in funny costumes, and we'd have a special assembly for the freshman initiation, and also for our honor students. The students out there were all good; they took an interest in their education. We had no discipline problems. And I know after Myrtle Myles' husband Jack died, she offered a ten-dollar scholarship—ten dollars was quite a bit of money in those days—to the top student of the honor society. But we had quite a few students who were honor students; they were all conscientious.

I had one student who was a year older than I was. His name was Harold Johnson—Swedish. He never finished high school, and he wanted his diploma. He was a good student. I often wonder where he went and what field he entered after he left Austin. There is another student I had, Margaret Mullen; we called her "Cookie." She went to the University of Nevada and became a schoolteacher. She taught in Elko before moving to Reno. She just retired a year or two ago.

Zelma Givens also went on to school—went into nurse's training. She was a surgical nurse for a long time. Even after she married and had her family.

Marjory Hiskey only went to college for two years, and then she married Earle Seaborn, Elsie's brother. She met him in Austin when he was in mining engineering and she was in high school.

Whenever we had a school banquet, we had the junior-senior prom or the awards banquet. We always had the banquet at Harry's Cafe at the International. Harry always cooked the dinner the teachers always had to give the speeches. Then after the banquet was over, in our high-heeled shoes and long party dresses, we'd have to walk from Harry's Cafe clear up the end of the street and up the hill by the Catholic church, up the hill to the schoolhouse in our high heels and long dresses [laughs]. They always had a dance after any banquet that we had, but the dancing was always up at the schoolhouse.

We always put on two plays a year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Depending on the play that we chose, how many in the cast, because most of the time our high-school student body averaged around fifteen students. Of course, we'd need a prompter, and we'd need one for changing scenery and all the other things that go along with putting on a play. The public was invited, and there was a charge, so we could make money for our school fund.

The elementary school generally put on the holiday programs for George Washington's birthday and Lincoln's birthday and Admission day—special holidays. The elementary school would put on the school programs for that.

Whenever we had any holiday programs, the teachers always had to give the main speeches about the history of the holiday, like Washington and Lincoln, Admission day, and Columbus day.

Some of the students that lived in the outlying ranches—when they finished their eighth grade in the country schools—would generally come into Austin and board with a family to go to high school. There were a lot of them that dropped out, that didn't go

on. They just stayed on the ranch after they finished eighth grade.

In the evening, we would take the students, that didn't have anything to do and wanted to come, up to the Episcopal church. We played games, and I played the organ, and we sang songs. Well, we spent a couple of hours up there. That wasn't expected of the schoolteachers, but we just did it because we were accepted as part of the community.

We had baseball games and volleyball games. There was no gymnasium when I was out there, so it all had to be outside in the field at the bottom of the hill. That was another walk down the hill and up. Then the school was equipped with showers, so the kids could take a shower after we played ball. The big thing was when I'd get there, they always rooted for me to make a homerun, and I never did. Then in inclement weather, there was the same size room down in the basement as the multipurpose room upstairs, so that way, we could play indoor games and exercises. But we tried to give the kids exercise all the time.

Our biggest entertainment was going on picnics and fishing trips on weekends. During the school week, nobody had time to go anywhere because we were at school all day, and they had their homework to do. Then we'd go back up to school at night and work on the newspaper and the yearbook, so on weekends we always went on a fishing trip or out on a picnic someplace. All the kids, everybody participated in town. There were about, I'd say, four hundred people in Austin at that time.

Now, there were a lot of places where we went for picnics and fishing, so this gives you an idea. There was Darrough Hot Springs that was in Smokey Valley. The Bauman Hot Springs which was north in Grass Valley, that's out towards where Molly Knudtsen has her Grass Valley ranch. The Baumans had a ranch

out there, and they had a big hot springs, so we'd have school picnics out there and go swimming.

Most of the school picnics that we had close to town were at Birch Creek because we'd go out towards Stokes Castle and down the road into a valley, and there would be an area big enough where we could have a baseball game. There was a creek coming there.

We had no regular fishing poles; we'd just take a willow off of one of the willow bushes and put a string and a safety pin on the end of it. One of the fellows would put a piece of meat on the end of the safety pin. One time I had walked on up the creek to do some fishing, and believe it or not, I caught a fish. The camp was down here, and they could hear me screaming; I was so excited. I caught a fish about ten or twelve inches long [laughs], so that got me started on my fishing expeditions.

The teachers were looked up to in the community; we were somebody extra-special to come out there and teach. Of course, the kids always tried to pull all these shenanigans, but there was nothing harmful; it was just all fun things. Like one night, I remember we went to a show; Emmett Malloy and Manuel Barainca had been eating a lot of garlic, and they drank some wine, and they came to the show, and they'd move from one place to another. Oh, just the smell of the garlic alone, and everybody'd move, and finally they'd just leave the show [laughs]. You know, just little things like that, there was no harm done, but it all, we thought, was a big laugh.

Well, I was a city girl, and I didn't know all these things and was very gullible. They'd say that in order to be initiated into the community you had to go snipe hunting [laughs]. I didn't know what a snipe was; they said, "Oh, it's just a little small bird and an animal that goes in around the bushes." You had to do your snipe hunting at night, so

they'd give you a flashlight and a gunnysack and take us out to where there was a lot of sagebrush and leave us there then to go snipe hunting. I could still remember chasing around all those sagebrushes trying to find those darn "snipers." [Laughs] The rest of them standing back just roaring. So, the next year, somebody new would come out, and we'd all keep our mouths shut. We wouldn't say anything about it when they had to be initiated into snipe hunting.

I can't recall of any dissent among any of the faculty or any complaints. The principal was very understanding and accepted any changes. We were accepted by all of the children. Even though we went on picnics and played together on weekends, they had all the respect for us in school.

I taught both world and American history, but there wasn't the material to teach by. You see that must have been about the time World War II had started, so all we had was World War I, some material on that. And very little published. Just like with Nevada history, there was nothing published on that. Of course, through the Territorial Enterprise, I guess, of Virginia City, and they had the Reese River Reveille—. But when I taught Nevada history at Northside Junior High here in Reno in '47, there was just one book that Dr. [Effie Mona] Mack had published that we could use, and that was all; otherwise, I got my material from Harolds Club. He had some stories on Nevada history.

We also had a student council; a senior student was generally the president and then one from each class. The student council was responsible, with the guidance of the principal, for the conduct and activities of the school: what should be done and what should be charged. So it taught the students responsibility for government leadership.

We had no field trips because at that time there were no school buses. The only field trip

was when I took my shorthand class down to the courthouse, but otherwise, there were no field trips of any kind.

The senior students who graduated—there was no future in Austin for them; there were very few of them that stayed there in Austin. They'd either come into Reno and get jobs, or they would attend the University of Nevada. But they left Austin, that's why so many of them live here in Reno now that I knew out there at that time.

Also, I think that I started the first adult-education classes in the state of Nevada; I don't know for sure because at that time Vegas was small because they were starting to build the dam about 1932. Because Easter vacation of '33 when my uncle visited us from Denmark, we drove down Fremont Street. I had four students; there was Eunice Easton, Anita Rast, Elmer Isaac and Francis McGinnis that had already graduated from high school. They were still around Austin, and they wanted some advanced commercial training. They asked me if I'd mind going up to the school at night, so they could practice. So I said, "No, I didn't mind." In a small community, time meant nothing, and you couldn't go anywhere, so we were up at the schoolhouse most of the time. I had those four students, and they all came into Reno later. Elmer Isaac, as I remember, was a terrific typist. He moved down to southern California, and I don't know what company he worked for.

After the students had finished high school, most of them left except a lot of the Dorys and Gandolfos; they're still out in the Austin area. That was about the time that World War II was starting, so that opened up many jobs where the kids could find work. Also, some of my commercial students took state jobs, like Rose Aberasturi went into the Nevada State Welfare department as head bookkeeper. She was there until she had her



thirty years in for retirement. Anita Rast worked—I don't know whether it was the Fish and Game or the agricultural department—. So, they went into state work. John Aberasturi was Superintendent of the Children's Home in Carson until his retirement. So even in a small mining town we were able to produce some good stable citizens in professions.



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## FAMILY INFLUENCE

My dad's name was Hans C. Madsen, and he came to Reno in 1898 from Svendborg, on the island of Fyn, Denmark. The reason he came here to Reno was because he had a married sister living here. He left Denmark when he was eighteen because he had to join the Danish army which he didn't want to do, so he came to the United States. Of course, as soon as he came here, he applied for his citizenship. He was a self-educated man as he had only an equivalent of a third-grade education.

When he first came here, he worked for the Reno Lumber Company until 1913 when he started the Washoe Wood and Coal yard which is still in existence today. It is now owned by my nephew, Jon Madsen.

My mother, Anna Hansen, came from Ollerup on the island of Fyn, Denmark. She came to Reno in 1903. When she first came to the U.S., she stayed with an uncle in Chicago and worked. She worked for the Doolittles, that famous flyer [James Harold] Jimmy Doolittle, and he was just a boy. They were going to move to Pasadena [California] and

wanted to adopt my mother, but she didn't want to. That's why she came to Reno and had a friend, Stena Nelson. She stayed with her, and she just worked as a cook for wealthy families because I know she used to work for the [J. H.] Clemons family and for Dr. [W. H.] Patterson. All she did was the cooking, she didn't have any other housework.

She met and married my father in March of 1908. She had about the equivalent of an eighth-grade education because she came from a wealthy family in Denmark. My father came from a very poor farming family. Both my mother and dad came from the Island of Fyn. They had four children.

After we all became school age, my mother went to work in the office to help my dad because going through periods of financing. He borrowed money from the bank in the summertime to buy all his wood and coal; then throughout the winter as he sold it, he paid back his bank loan. He had to do that for several years. Finances were never discussed with our family, so I really don't know—when I graduated from high school

in '28, the stock market crashed in '29—how they managed to give us an education because it was always uppermost with both my mother and dad that the four of us should have a good education and get out and work for a while to prove we could make our own living before we got married.

My oldest sister, Iola, went to business school in San Francisco; then she worked for a while there and then came back. She was bookkeeper for R. Herz and Brothers Jewelers until she married Dr. Leonard Jacob, a dentist, and they had two girls. Of course, I graduated from the University of Nevada—now known as the University of Nevada-Reno—with a B.A. degree in 1932. At that time there was only one state university. My brother, [Edward] Buzz Madsen, only went two years, took business administration, but he couldn't see going on finishing college when he was going to take over my father's business anyhow. He'd already worked there since he was old enough to help out and was familiar with the business. My youngest sister, Mildred, graduated in 1933, so we were the only two that were college graduates with a B.A. She was working on her Masters in math and taught math at the University until she took a position in Carson [City] with the Department of Education as head statistician. She worked under four superintendents there during the eight year period that she was in Carson.

Money that was appropriated from the legislature for education, well, she had to budget it to all the counties for their needs. She also wrote the course of study; she helped work on that and get it assembled, what was expected of the schools in the state of Nevada, not only Reno but the whole state. Then she went to San Francisco and worked for the Navy during the war. She met and married Lawrence Baker from Bakersfield. He was

an attorney. They had two boys. My brother married Eleanor Tubbs from Santa Barbara. She was a medical technician. They had three children, John, Marilyn and Mike.

I can look back now and see how my mother and dad just kept pushing us to get that education because what a struggle they had in making a living without an education. They could, I guess, foresee the future. It's like after I had left Austin. I was planning on going to Elko that summer, but I got married in August instead. We lived in Lovelock for a year; I married Howard Miles, and at that time he worked for the county highway department in Austin. He was originally from Colorado. Then he got a state job; he was foreman of the highway department in Lovelock. That's why we moved to Lovelock and lived there a year. Then we moved to Reno in 1937, and he helped my father in his business. I had my daughter, Lynn, in '39 and a son, Stan, in '42. My daughter has two boys, Randy and Jim. My son has two girls, Jennie and Wendy.

They needed a history and English teacher at Reno High School at that time. E. Otis Vaughn—we always called him "Daddy" Vaughn—was superintendent at that time, and he couldn't get a hold of me, so he got a hold of my mother and asked her if I would teach at Reno High that year, that I would just have five classes and no extracurricular work or homeroom. I had a desk right next to the principal, Earl Wooster. I remember telling my mother that no, I wasn't going to teach any more; I wanted a home and family. She said that she had already told them that I was going to take the job [laughs], so I took the job and taught that year at a hundred dollars a month.

Mildred [N.] Bray was superintendent of instruction at that time, and she said, "Well, send over your credentials, and I'll give you both elementary and secondary life certificates." Of course, they don't issue

those any more. It was a good thing that I had those life certificates because when I had to go back teaching in '47, all I had to do was take those out and dust them off and went to the superintendent, and I had a contract for a job. It was something that an older person could foresee that you don't at the time yourself.

At the University at that time, they had both the two year normal and a four year graduate school. Of course, I took teaching as my career as I always liked working with children. I did a lot of babysitting while growing up to make extra money. At that time I was paid ten cents an hour. My first semester of student teaching, I did fifth grade at the old Southside School, and my second semester, eighth grade at the Northside Junior High. I didn't do any student teaching in my major or minor from the University. Of course, in eighth grade, I did teach history.

When I was babysitting, I remember three houses down the street, there was a little white house, and there was a family by the name of Frank Costello and his wife and two children. I used to go down there and babysit with the two children after school and on weekends. It wasn't until later, I found out this Frank Costello was one of the gangsters from Chicago [laughs]. Here he was living in Reno, but we were kept in ignorance of anything like that, yet they were real nice people. My mother didn't have any objections to me babysitting.

Of course, during school while I was at the University, I had to get a summer job in order to help with expenses. Knowing them so well down at Herz and my sister working there, I generally had a summer job at Herz [Jewelers]. One summer I didn't have a job and I had to go to summer school. There was no playing around all summer.

That's why when I got my position in Austin, I was lucky to get it because it was

during the Depression, like it is today where any jobs are hard to get.

At that time, you just had to have two years out in the field before you could come into the system. After I put in my two years out in Austin, my mother just kept bugging me to go to the school board here in Reno and apply for a job. She didn't think that that was any place for me to be out in Austin. There were times she came out for a visit. She came with the car all loaded up with the essentials that we needed. When she was out that last year and no water, she thought that was no place for her daughter to be.

But she couldn't talk me out of it because, I think, those four years experience in Austin was the best four years of my life. Of course, I learned to be very independent. The people were friendly, and it was fun, and I liked the community even though it was a small population. I think, why my mother tried to bring us home, we were a very close family. Even when my sister moved home from San Francisco, she lived at home. When my youngest sister worked in Carson, she lived at home and commuted. Part of the time she lived in Carson. I was the only one that really took off on my own and was enjoying my freedom that I didn't have anybody breathing down my neck.

Then in '39, I had my daughter, Lynn, and in '42 I had my son, Stan. During that period of time, I did substituting. Then I returned to fulltime teaching again in '47, so I had at least a good thirty-five years of teaching, not including my substituting. Then I retired in '75 at the age of sixty-five as it was the law at that time, and I couldn't teach any longer.

In Austin I learned independence, responsibility, and a lot of self-confidence. My four years of teaching in Austin taught me to become a responsible adult because I had to take on the responsibility of raising

my family from 1947 until they grew up and got married.

When my father became ill with leukemia, he was in the hospital, and he was telling me how I could do some remodeling around the house. I broke down, and I cried and I cried. He let me go ahead and cry; then when I got it out of my system, he said, "All right Eve, tell me what's your problem." I told him that Howard and I were getting a divorce, and I already had a contract to go back teaching school. He said, "Well, one thing I know, Eve, I don't ever have to worry about you." I always kept that in the back of my mind. I think he meant that it's because he gave me my education. I never had much money, but at least I had that education, and I'd learned to become independent and responsible. I feel as though I learned those things by going out to Austin to teach school. I don't think I'd have been as strong a character if I'd have stayed close to home, where at that time whether you were married or not and had a dozen kids, you did as your mother and dad said. They were the leaders of the family.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS



Evelyn Madsen learning to shoot



Evelyn Madsen's graduation  
from UNR, class of '32





"Little Caesar," (left to right) Evelyn, Helen Montrose, Louise Rawson



Henry Nelson, principal



Left to Right: Elsie Seaborn,  
Evelyn Madsen, Louise Rawson





Austin High School students on a picnic at Big Creek



Austin school faculty, 1933-34:  
 (left to right, back row) Helen Montrose, Hazel Christiansen,  
 Dollyruth Crowell, Louise Rawson;  
 (left to right, front row) Evelyn Madsen, Henry Nelson



Austin school building (built 1928)



Bird Cage



Stokes Castle



Austin, Nevada (c. 1932)



Grass Valley Ranch (1933), Molly Magee Knudtsen's home



Nevada Central Railroad car, Battle Mountain to Austin



Placer mining, Round Mountain (c. 1932)



Evelyn Madsen and Easton boys skiing



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